

Lang Loran

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Limited Wars

Or Massive Retaliation?

PAUL H. NITZE

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In January, 1954, Mr. Dulles delivered his famous speech at the Council on Foreign Relations in which the doctrine of massive retaliation was announced. In the audience were a number of people who had long wrestled with problems of strategy and politics in a nuclear age, and around the room one could see many whose expressions made it clear that they could hardly believe their ears as Mr. Dulles continued from point to point. When the speech was over a number of us met in the bar and exchanged reactions. It seemed almost incredible that in the very moment when the loss of our atomic monopoly, which had long been foreseen, was becoming actuality, Mr. Dulles should announce in blunt and offensive terms what he claimed was a new doctrine, the doctrine of depending "primarily" upon a great capacity to retaliate, instantly, by means and at places of our choosing.

From the end of the war, and the hasty "point" demobilization that followed it, until the fall of 1949 the military support for United States policy rested on a capability for atomic retaliation and upon little else. The budget ceiling of \$13 to \$14 billion permitted little in the way of conventional forces.

BUT WHEN, in the fall of 1949, the Chinese mainland had been captured by the Communists and the Russians had tested their first atomic bomb, it became evident to those who dealt with military-political policy matters in Washington that both our past military-political doctrine and the concrete efforts we were making in support of that doctrine were grossly inadequate. Faced with the imminent loss of our atomic monopoly, we would need to

make a greatly increased effort to provide against the danger of Soviet atomic attack or threat of attack. And we were clearly giving inadequate attention to providing the necessary tools for military protection against limited military aggression and to support the manifold requirements of the successful conduct of the cold war—the cold war in which victory in any meaningful sense was possible.

In the spring of 1950 a new policy was formulated in a National Security Council document entitled N.S.C. 68. This policy was approved in principle by President Truman in April of that year. The detailed programs to support the new policy were being developed when the attack on South Korea took place in June, 1950. The Korean War was a limited war fought for limited objectives under the cover of a rapidly developing nuclear capability for general war, in a manner generally conforming to the policy laid down in N.S.C. 68.

Secretary Dulles's massive-retaliation statement did not announce a new doctrine but a return to a pre-1950 doctrine. It was not a step forward; it was a step backward—a step back dictated not by new strategic considerations but by domestic political and budgetary considerations. Ever since, the rationale of our military-political doctrine has been a shambles of inconsistencies, inadequacies, and reappraisals.

Henry A. Kissinger, director of a group studying the effects of nuclear power on foreign policy for the Council on Foreign Relations, has now published, as a result of these studies, a book entitled *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy*. In 456 pages he has a field day with these inconsistencies, inadequacies, and reappraisals. He does not, however, concentrate his attack on Mr. Dulles and those other members of the present administra-

tion (such as Wilson, Quarles, and Nixon) who still occasionally give voice to the massive-retaliation doctrine. He includes in his target for all our political leaders of all parties, all our senior military officers, whether Army or Air Force generals or Navy admirals, and the leading senators and congressmen who deal with military policy and appropriations. In essence what he attacks is the over-all approach of the United States as a nation to international politics and military strategy.

The First Blow

I find the picture that Kissinger presents oversimplified and overdrawn. It gives inadequate allowance both to the rich and varied development of the nation's political thinking and strategic ideas in response to the rapid evolution of this country's position in the world and to the very real difficulties that its policy has had to face. Kissinger gives the impression that with one adequate doctrine all would have been much easier. He seems to imply that such a doctrine would have called either for a preventive big war or for a series of little offensive wars during the period of our atomic monopoly. He suggests that our doctrine made it impossible to conceive of such a strategy. These things were all conceived of. They were rejected for what seemed to me, and still seem to me, very good and sufficient reason. The only people whose doctrinal and strategic ideas are referred to with approval by Kissinger are Lenin, Stalin, Mao, Hitler, and Napoleon—though I do not mean to suggest that he endorses all their views. Doctrine appropriate to a revolutionary dictator may be intellectually stimulating and we may in fact have much to learn from it. But the basis of our purpose, our situation, and our task as a nation are so different from those of the revolutionary dictators as to suggest that we be leery of adopting too much of their point of view for ourselves.

Many of the points, however, that Kissinger develops against the positions of absolute peace or of absolute war are well developed and at times brilliantly put. Much of what he says needs saying, and

needs to be repeated again and again.

The book is hard to read. My first impression was that this was due to the time pressure under which the book was written and was largely a matter of style. On going over it a second time, I have the impression that the difficulty is more deep-seated. There are several hundred passages in which either the facts or the logic seem doubtful, or at least unclear.

At one point, for instance, he says that the blast and heat effects of weapons increase only by the cube root of their stepped-up explosive power, and that the blast effect of the twenty-kiloton bomb exploded over Hiroshima was only ten times greater than a twenty-ton TNT blockburst. The applicable rule of thumb is the square of the cube root, and therefore the ratio



should be one hundred, not ten, to one. A megaton weapon has a blast effect ten thousand times that of a one-ton weapon, not one hundred times, which is what it would be if Kissinger's cube-root rule were in fact valid. This may possibly explain why Kissinger thinks that five-hundred-kiloton weapons are appropriate for inclusion in an arsenal for a limited nuclear strategy designed to spare from annihilation the inhabitants of the geographic area in which the campaign is to be fought. Errors in fact of an order of magnitude of one hundred to one can have significant implications for doctrine.

Kissinger repeatedly, almost regretfully, remarks that U.S. doctrine has conceded the initial blow in nuclear war to the enemy. The implication of this way of putting it is thoroughly misleading. If our preparations were not such as to enable us to survive an initial blow and still retaliate, our posture would be an invitation to surprise attack. On the one hand, we would

tempt the enemy to strike first. On the other, we would be tempted to initiate a preventive war ourselves in order to forestall the attack we would otherwise have to expect. Our strategic preparation must therefore be designed against the contingency that the enemy strikes first. Our often stated policy, however, is that we would probably meet certain types of non-nuclear aggression by initiating a nuclear attack ourselves. Our doctrine does not therefore necessarily concede the first nuclear blow to the enemy.

Kissinger has great faith in the power of doctrine. At the close of the book he says: "... in foreign policy certainty is conferred at least as much by philosophy as by fact. It derives from the imposition of purpose on events." At the beginning of the book he says: "For better or for worse strategy must henceforth be charted against the ominous assumption that any war is likely to be a nuclear war." I see little purpose in making every war, even a limited war, a nuclear one.

Right Back Where We Started?

Kissinger makes his argument in favor of a strategy of limited nuclear war depend on the proposition that it is possible to design a system of limitations and a body of military tactics for a war in Europe that would permit the use of nuclear weapons, but only against limited targets in a limited geographic area and with weapons of limited type and size, and thereby defend western Europe without destroying Russia, the United States, or western Europe. Perhaps it will be possible to design such a system and to secure the concurrence of the European countries that are to be defended and also that of the Soviet Union. I doubt, however, that the system Kissinger proposes makes much of a contribution toward such a goal.

He proposes a geographic limitation of five hundred miles on either side of an initial demarcation line. He also proposes that any city, and an area of thirty miles' radius surrounding it, can be declared an open city if it contains no military installations such as airfields or missile installations. He leaves the reader to guess whether these ex-

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cluded areas (both the areas beyond the one-thousand-mile combat zone and the open cities) are to be excluded from all military activities or only from nuclear military activities.

If the former, then the outcome of the war will be determined by the forces in being within the non-excluded area on D Day, because reinforcement and resupply after D Day will be ruled out. Such a system would put a premium on a secret pre-D Day build-up, in which it would seem the Russians might have considerable natural advantages. If the latter reading is assumed, that the exclusion applies only to nuclear weapons, then the war may become largely a conventional war for control of the areas excluded from nuclear attack. In any case there are few if any areas in western Europe in which the cities are more than sixty miles apart. If it is possible to exclude one's own cities from destruction by declaring them open, I should think every European country would insist on declaring all its cities open. We are then right back where we started from: Either the Russians under threat of massive retaliation forswear aggression against western Europe or the war Kissinger contemplates is a conventional war.

IN THE NUCLEAR AGE everyone must be for the limitation of war, if war itself cannot be eliminated. But if the limitations are really to stand up under the immense pressures of even a "little" war, it would seem something more is required than a Rube Goldberg chart of arbitrary limitations, weightless weapons, flying platforms with no fuel requirements, and tactics based on no targets for attack and no logistic or communication vulnerabilities to defend.

In spite of what seem to me to be its serious shortcomings, Kissinger's book makes a distinct contribution to the continuing debate on the central strategic questions facing us and facing the world. Nowhere else is as full a treatment of the background material necessary to a consideration of these questions brought together. But the debate must go on. No resting place is yet in sight.

Mr. Waugh's Bad Dream

GERALD WEALES

THE ORDEAL OF GILBERT PINFOLD, by Evelyn Waugh. Little, Brown. \$3.75.

Evelyn Waugh's novels have ordinarily grown out of some personal experience that has provided a background he could people with his brittle and funny characters or that has suggested an idea around which he could build a satirical plot. Thus *Black Mischief*, his early novel about an attempt to modernize a primitive culture, grew out of his trip to Ethiopia in 1930 to cover the coronation of Haile Selassie, and *The Loved One*, his short, sharp story of death and burial in southern California, followed on an assignment from *Life* to do an article on Forest Lawn Cemetery in Los Angeles. It is not surprising then that his new novel, *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold*, is about a middle-aged novelist who suffers from hallucinations: Waugh himself went through such a hallucinatory bout in 1954.

When Aldous Huxley took to mescaline a few years ago, he recorded his hallucinations as though he were a sensitive scientist in search of colorful and comfortable data and then tried to transmute the results into a vaguely philosophical suggestion. No such path is possible for Waugh. After his hallucinations he began to look for a plot on which he could hang his experience; his new novel is a frank attempt to make comic capital out of what happened to him three years ago. Ideally, Waugh's approach should be more rewarding than Huxley's. But the plot is excessively slim and the comedy only intermittently funny.

Voices Come, Voices Go

All that the new book can offer by way of story is the voice-haunted voyage of the hero from England to Port Said. Gilbert Pinfold, sensing imminent collapse, decides that a trip to Ceylon will be a restorative. Almost as soon as he gets on board the S.S. *Caliban* he begins to hear noises—a dog snuffling in the corridor, a prayer meeting beneath the floor of his cabin, a band that mixes

jazz and esoteric Indian music. Then come the voices. They haunt him, accuse him of all manner of social misrepresentation, excite him with lurid dramatic incidents (in one the captain beats a steward to death), and threaten him with violence. At first the whole ship seems to be involved in a plot against him, but as the voyage goes forward the voices dwindle to three—Mr. Angel, the ringleader, at once domineering and cringing; harsh-voiced Gonerril; and amorous Margaret. When he abandons the ship at Port Said, hoping to escape them, the three voices follow him as he flies to Ceylon and back again to England, leaving him only when he gets back to London. Medically, there may be an explanation for Pinfold's hallucinations—the sleeping powder that he takes mixed with crème de menthe, the large gray pills that he uses to help along the effect of the powder, the wine and brandy that he pours liberally after the drugs—but aesthetically there is not. The voices come, the voices go, but their arrival and departure are as pointless as Pinfold's trip to Ceylon.

Perhaps it is too much to ask that a significant story be formed out of the hallucinations. A note at the front of the book seems to embody its *raison d'être*: "Since his disconcerting voyage he has learned that a great number of sane people suffer in this way from time to time. He believes this record may amuse them." I cannot testify to the effect of the novel on Waugh's fellow sufferers, but by ordinary, nonhallucinatory standards it is not really very amusing. Some of the episodes that he overhears seem to parody adventure tales or sentimental radio programs and are effective enough on that level. But most of the book is filled only with nagging voices that are likely to be as tiresome to the reader as they are to Pinfold.

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The First Blow

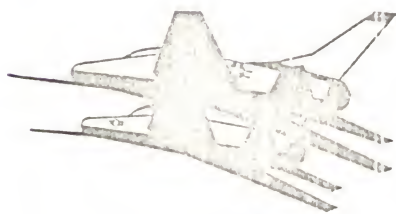
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Kissinger makes his argument in favor of a strategy of limited nuclear war depend on the proposition that it is possible to design a system of limitations and a body of military tactics for a war in Europe that would permit the use of nuclear weapons, but only against limited targets in a limited geographic area and with weapons of limited type and size, and thereby defend western Europe without destroying Russia, the United States, or western Europe. Perhaps it will be possible to design such a system and to secure the concurrence of the European countries that are to be defended and also that of the Soviet Union. I doubt, however, that the system Kissinger proposes makes much of a contribution toward such a goal.

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If the former, then the outcome of the war will be determined by the forces in being within the non-excluded area on D Day, because reinforcement and resupply after D Day will be ruled out. Such a system would put a premium on a secret pre-D Day build-up, in which it would seem the Russians might have considerable natural advantages. If the latter reading is assumed, that the exclusion applies only to nuclear weapons, then the war may become largely a conventional war for control of the areas excluded from nuclear attack. In any case there are few if any areas in western Europe in which the cities are more than sixty miles apart. If it is possible to exclude one's own cities from destruction by declaring them open, I should think every European country would insist on declaring all its cities open. We are then right back where we started from: Either the Russians under threat of massive retaliation forswear aggression against western Europe or the war Kissinger contemplates is a conventional war.

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